

# Introduction to post medieval coins & identification guide for archaeologists

## Guide 38



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image: Silver penny of Elizabeth I . PAS database

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## Introduction

Today most coins are found by metal detectorists but occasionally they are found on archaeological sites. This guide is the second part of a series of guides introducing coins from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the modern period. This guide will cover the post-medieval hammered coinage from Henry VIII's debasement in 1544 to the end of the hammered series in late 1662. The guide will be divided into two parts; the first part will be an introduction to post medieval coinage detailing the basic layout, legends and denominations. The second part will be a simple classification guide covering the coinages from 1544 to 1662.

## Numismatic terminology

When dealing with coins it's important to be aware of some of the more specialist terminology used and this small section will give a glossary of some of the terminology

**Blank:** the piece of metal before it's struck into a coin

**Flan:** The whole coin after striking

**Legend:** the inscription with the rulers name and titles

**Graining:** the crenellations around the edge of the coin (present on milled coins only)

**Die:** The block of metal with the design cut into it

**Mule:** A coin with the current type on one side and a previous type on the other

**Initial mark:** The mark or symbol placed at the start of the obverse or reverse legends

**Mintmark:** The mark or symbol when it is placed elsewhere in the legend

**Hammered:** The traditional method for producing coins when the coin is produced by hammering the coin between two dies

**Milled:** The production of coins using a coining press, coins produced using this method are of much higher quality than coins produced by hammering.

### Basic post medieval hammered coin layout

The basic layout of a post medieval hammered coin is shown in the diagram below. It must be mentioned that the layout is different on certain coins for example some types don't have a bust. The table below the diagram will offer a quick guide of the direction the bust on the coin is facing.



Monarch	Facing	Bust left	Bust right
Henry VIII	X		
Edward VI	X		X
Mary Tudor		X	
Elizabeth I		X	
James I		X	X
Charles I		X	
Cromwell		X	
Charles II		X	

## Reading the legends

This section will look at some of the different legends on post medieval coins and how to read and translate them. The legends on post medieval coins are easier to read compared to the legends on medieval coins

On most hammered post medieval coins the obverse legend starts at 12 O' Clock after the initial mark and starts with the rulers name followed by their titles.

The first example is an Elizabeth I sixpence dating to 1593, the obverse legend starts at 12 O' Clock after the initial mark, which in this case is a tun.



The obverse legend reads as **ELIZAB'D.G:ANG:FR:ET:HIB:REGI:** and the reverse legend reads as **POSVI DEV:AD IVTORE M.MEV:**

The obverse legend translates as Elizabeth by the grace of god queen of England, France and Ireland. The reverse legend translates as 'I have made god my helper'.

The second example is a James I shilling with the sixth bust of the third coinage dating to 1623-24, the legend starts at 12 O' Clock after the initial mark, which is a lis



The obverse legend reads as **IACOB:D:G:MAG:BRI:FRA:ETHIB:REX**. And the reverse legend reads as **QVAE DEVS CONIVNXIT NEMO SEPARAT**

The obverse legend translates as James by the grace of god king of Great Britain, France and Ireland, while the reverse translates as 'What god hath joined together, let no man put asunder'.

The title of **ANG** in the obverse legend changes to **MAG BRI** in 1604 at the start of the second coinage of James I. The title change is representing the unification of the English and Scottish crowns under one monarch.

There are a large number of different legends on post medieval coins and far too many to list here. For a full list of legends and their meanings on post medieval coins see <http://www.psdetecting.com/Inscriptions.html>

## Denominations

This section will look at the various denominations used in the English coinage. The post medieval and early modern period sees a much greater variety of denominations than the medieval period. For the purpose of easy identification of the denominations, they will be listed under each monarch of the period along with their value and diameter.

### Henry VIII (r.1509-47) debased coinage 1544-47

#### **Gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Sovereign	38mm	20 shillings
Half sovereign	29mm-30mm	10 shillings
Angel	26mm-27mm	8 shillings
Half angel	19mm	4 shillings
Quarter Angel	16mm	2 shillings
Crown	24mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	18mm-19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

#### **Silver**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Testoon	30mm	1 shilling
Groat	24mm	4 pence
Halfgroat	18mm-20mm	2 pence
Penny	15mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm	½ penny
Farthing	9mm	¼ penny





Henry VIII groat of the third coinage with the first bust and initial mark Lis  
(Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### **Edward VI (r.1547-53)**

The coinage of Edward VI is divided into three periods based on the quality of the coinage and each period produced different denominations (further details will be discussed in the classification section). The coinage of the first and second periods was of poor quality but the coinage of the third period was of much better quality. The shillings of the second coinage were the first English coins to bare a date.

#### **First Period (1547-49) gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Half sovereign	29mm-30mm	10 shillings
Crown	23mm-24mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

#### **Silver**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Groat	24mm	4 pence
Halfgroat	18mm-20mm	2 pence
Penny	15mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm-12mm	½ penny

### Second period (1549-50) gold

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Sovereign	35mm	20 shillings
Half sovereign	27mm-28mm	10 shillings
Crown	23-24mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

### Silver

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Shilling	27mm-30mm	12 pence



Second period Edward VI Half sovereign of the Southwark mint, initial mark is a letter Y (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Second Period Edward VI shilling with the 5<sup>th</sup> bust of the London mint with the initial mark an arrow dating to 1549 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### Third Period (1550-53) gold

Denomination	Diameter	Value
'Fine' Sovereign	44mm	30 shillings
Sovereign	36mm	20 shillings
Half sovereign	32mm	10 shillings
Angel	29mm	10 shillings
Half Angel	19mm	5 shillings
Crown	23-24mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

### Silver

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Crown	41mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	36mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	32mm	12 pence
Sixpence	28mm	6 pence
Threepence	21mm	3 pence
Penny	18mm-19mm	1 penny
Farthing	8mm	¼ penny

During this period base pennies and halfpennies were also produced in 1551 and these circulated as halfpennies and farthings respectively.



Silver crown of Edward VI with the initial mark a tun, dating to 1552 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## Mary I (r.1553-58)

### Gold

Denomination	Diameter	Value
'Fine' sovereign	44mm	30 shillings
Ryal	34mm	15 shillings
Angel	28mm	10 shillings
Half angel	19mm	5 shillings

### Silver

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Shilling (after 1554)	31mm	12 pence
Sixpence (after 1554)	27mm	6 pence
Groat	24mm	4 pence
Halfgroat	19mm-20mm	2 pence
penny	14-15mm	1 penny
Base penny (after 1554)	14mm	½ penny



Groat of Mary dating from 1553-54, initial mark is a pomegranate (located after **MARIA**) (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## **Elizabeth I (r.1558-1603)**

The coinage of Elizabeth I can be divided into six different issues based on fineness and weight but for simplicity they will be listed as one in the tables below. This reign is noted for the large number of denominations, it must be mentioned that all the denominations were not produced at once. It was during Elizabeth's reign that the first coins produced by machinery came into being (known as milled coins), however this did not last long and the traditional hammered method continued. Some denominations have distinguishing marks which help identification for example, the sixpence, threepence, three-halfpence and the three-farthings have a rose behind the bust and the date on the reverse above the shield. The halfgroat of the sixth and seventh issues have two pellets behind the bust.

### **Gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
'Fine' sovereign	44mm	30 shillings
Pound	39mm	20 shillings
Halfpound	31mm	10 shillings
Ryal	33mm	15 shillings
Angel	29mm-30mm	8 shillings
Half Angel	19mm-20mm	4 shillings
Quarter Angel	17mm	2 shillings 2 pence
Crown	22mm-23mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

### **Silver**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Crown	41mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	34mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	30mm	12 pence
Sixpence	25mm-26mm	6 pence
Groat	23mm-24mm	4 pence
Threepence	17mm-18mm	3 pence
Halfgroat	16mm	2 pence
Three-halfpence	12mm-14mm	1 ½ penny

penny	14mm-15mm	1 penny
Three-farthings	11mm-12mm	$\frac{3}{4}$ penny
Halfpenny	9mm-11mm	$\frac{1}{2}$ penny

The only milled denominations produced during Elizabeth's reign were the gold half pound, crown and halfcrown and the silver shilling, sixpence, groat, threepence, halfgroat and three-farthing.



Sixpence of Elizabeth I of the third issue, with the initial mark a coronet dating to 1569. The rose is located behind the bust (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Milled sixpence of type D dating to 1562 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## **James I (r.1603-25)**

The coinage of James I can be divided into three periods based on the three re-coinages that occurred during his reign. The silver denominations remained the same throughout the reign but there were changes to the gold and these are listed in the tables below. It was in 1613 that the first copper coinage since the Roman period was minted in England. Copper replaced silver as the metal for the farthings. The values of the gold coins were raised by 10% in 1612 only to be reduced again in 1619. The silver denominations (except the crown and halfcrown) are easily identifiable by having the value of the coin behind the bust

### **First coinage (1603-04) Gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Sovereign	36mm	20 shillings
Half-sovereign	31mm	10 shillings
Crown	22mm-24mm	5 shillings
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

### **Second coinage (1604-16) Gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Rose-Ryal	42mm	30 shillings(33 after 1612)
Unite	37mm	20 shillings (22 after 1612)
Spur-Ryal	33mm-34mm	15 shillings (16s 6d after 1612)
Angel	29mm-30mm	10 shillings (11 after 1612)
Double crown	27mm-28mm	10 shillings
Britain crown	23mm	5 shillings
Thistle crown	20mm-21mm	4 shillings
Half Angel	19mm-20mm	5 shillings ( 5s 6d after 1612)
Halfcrown	19mm	2 shillings 6 pence

### **Third coinage (1619-25) Gold**

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Rose-Ryal	42mm	30 shillings
Laurel	34mm-35mm	20 shillings

Spur-Ryal	33mm-34mm	15 shillings
Angel	29mm-30mm	10 shillings
Half-laurel	27mm	10 shillings
Quarter-laurel	20mm	5 shillings

### Silver all coinages

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Crown	43m	5 shillings
Halfcrown	34mm-35mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	31mm	12 pence
Sixpence	26mm	6 pence
Halfgroat	17mm-18mm	2 pence
Penny	14mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm	½ penny

### Copper

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Farthing	15mm	¼ penny



James I shilling of the second coinage with the fourth bust with the initial mark a rose dating to 1605-06 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



## Charles I (r.1625-49)

### Gold

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Unite	33mm	20 shillings
Angel	25mm-26mm	10 shillings
Double crown	26mm-27mm	10 shillings
Britain crown	19mm-23mm	5 shillings

### Silver

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Crown	43m	5 shillings
Halfcrown	34mm-35mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	31mm	12 pence
Sixpence	26mm	6 pence
Halfgroat	17mm-18mm	2 pence
Penny	14mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm	½ penny

### Copper

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Farthing	15mm	¼ penny



Charles I crown of Group I with the first horseman with a lis as initial mark dating to 1625 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell (1649-60)

### Gold

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Unite	34mm	20 shillings
Double crown	26mm	10 shillings
Crown	20mm	5 shillings

The Gold coins of Oliver Cromwell includes a 50 shilling piece and a so shilling piece known as a broad, these coins are extremely rare and were possibly produced as patterns, with a small amount in circulation.

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Crown	43m	5 shillings
Halfcrown	34mm-35mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	31mm	12 pence
Sixpence	26mm	6 pence
Halfgroat	17mm-18mm	2 pence
Penny	14mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm	½ penny

### Copper

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Farthing	15mm	¼ penny



Gold crown of the Commonwealth dating to 1649 with the sun initial mark  
(Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## Charles II (r.1660-85)

### Gold (1660-62)

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Unite	34mm	20 shillings
Double crown	26mm	10 shillings
Crown	18mm	5 shillings

### Silver (1600-62)

Denomination	Diameter	Value
Halfcrown	34mm-35mm	2 shillings 6 pence
Shilling	31mm	12 pence
Sixpence	26mm	6 pence
Halfgroat	17mm-18mm	2 pence
Penny	14mm	1 penny
Halfpenny	11mm	½ penny



Charles II halfcrown of the second issue dating to 1660-62 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## **Part II: Classifications**

This part will look at the coin classifications. Unlike the medieval coinage where the coins are divided up into types or classes, the post medieval coinage is based on issues the most complex of the hammered post medieval coinage is Charles I. It is impossible to list every type here and only the main types will be listed.

The following books offer an easy to use and detailed classification guide:

North, J. J 1991 *'English Hammered Coinage'* Volume 2. Spink and son, London

*'Coins of England and the United Kingdom'* published annually by Spink

*'The Small Change Halfpennies and Farthings'* series by P and B withers published by Galata

### **Tudor coins 1544-1603**

The post medieval Tudor coinage begins in 1544 when Henry VIII began to openly debase the coinage and all surviving medieval coins were sent to the melting pot. The Tudor post medieval coinage covers the final coinage and posthumous coinage of Henry VIII, the coinage of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I.

### **Henry VIII 1544-47**

The third, debased coinage of Henry VIII is identifiable by a lifelike crowned bust facing. There are six types of bust; the first four are on coins produced while Henry was still alive, while the fourth, fifth and sixth types are on the posthumous coinage though the first and second bust are used on some posthumous coins. The posthumous issue was issued from 1547-51 alongside the coinage of Edward VI. The diagrams below will show some examples of coins from Henry's third and posthumous issues



Testoon (shilling) of Henry VIII with crowned bust facing of the London mint, initial mark is a pellet in annulet (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Henry VIII groat of the third coinage with the second bust of the London mint, initial mark is a lis (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Posthumous groat of Henry VIII with the fourth bust of the York mint (Image from PAS: WILT-6F5050)

## **Edward VI 1547-53**

The coinage of Edward VI is based on the three different issues that were produced throughout his reign based on the silver content of the coins, the poorest quality coins belong to the beginning of the third period and issued for a short time in 1551 only to be replaced by fine silver coins with a much higher silver content. The coinage of the second period has five styles of bust and a sixth bust for the base issue of the third period. The shillings of the second period are the first English coins to bare a date. The shillings and sixpence of the fine silver of the third period were also the first English coins to bare the value of the coin. The diagrams below will show coins from the three different periods

### **First period 1547-49**



Edward VI half groat of the first period of the Canterbury mint (Image from PAS: SWYOR-9B6885)

### **Second period Jan 1549 to April 1550**



Edward VI shilling of the second period with the 5<sup>th</sup> bust, initial mark is an arrow (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### Third period, fine silver issue 1551-53



Edward VI shilling of the third period with the initial mark a tun (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### Mary I 1553-58

The coinage of Mary Tudor is divided into two periods; the first period was before her marriage to Philip II of Spain in 1554. Coins after the marriage have dual busts of Mary and Phillip and both names in the legends. Some Phillip and Mary shillings have the date above the busts separated by the crown.



Mary groat before marriage with the initial mark a pomegranate dating to 1553-54 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Phillip and Mary groat, initial mark is a lis (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Phillip and Mary undated shilling (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



## Elizabeth I 1558-1603

The coinage of Elizabeth is more or less uniform throughout her reign with no major design changes from her first issue to her last. All the coins of Elizabeth feature a crowned bust facing left. There were seven different issues based on the standard of silver in the coins. In 1560 the first machine produced 'milled' coins were produced, however the process was slow compared to the traditional hammered method and production of the milled coinage ceased in 1572.



Elizabeth I shilling of the seventh issue, dating to 1601-2 initial mark is a 1  
(Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Elizabeth I sixpence of the third issue dating to 1569, with the initial mark a coronet  
(Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Elizabeth I milled sixpence dating to 1562 with the initial mark a star (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Elizabeth I crown of the seventh issue, dating to 1601-2 with the initial mark a 1 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### **Further reading**

Bispham, J. 1985 'The Base Shillings of Edward VI' *British Numismatic Journal* volume 55, pp 132-43

Borden, D.G and Brown, I.D 1983 'The Milled coinage of Elizabeth I' *British Numismatic Journal* volume 53

Symonds, H. 1911 'The coinage of Mary Tudor' *British Numismatic Journal* volume 6

Whitton, C.A .1949-51 'The Coinages of Henry VIII and Edward VI in Henry's Name' *British Numismatic Journal* volume 26

## **Stuart coins 1603-1662**

The Stuart coinage begins in 1603 when James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne on the death of Elizabeth I. During the English civil war various provincial mints were opened minting coins in the name of the king. Following Charles' execution in 1649 Parliament and later Cromwell issued coins in the name of the Commonwealth. Royal coinage was restored in 1660 following Charles II's restoration.

### **James I 1603-25**

The coinage of James I can be divided into three periods based on the three coinages of the reign. There are six styles of bust for the silver coinage and five for the third coinage gold coins. There are 4 main types of copper farthings



James I shilling of the first coinage with the second bust, initial mark is a lis dating to 1604 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



James I shilling of the second coinage with the fourth bust, with the initial mark some grapes dating to 1607 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



James I shilling of the third coinage with the sixth bust, initial mark is a thistle dating to 1621-23 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



James I copper farthing of type 1 also known as the Harrington type dating from 1613-14 (Image from PAS: LVPL-BBE9E0)

## Charles I 1625-49

The coinage of Charles I can be divided into seven groups based on the style of the portrait and shield on the reverse. Milled coinage was again produced under Nicholas Briot in 1631-2 and again in 1638-9, again like in Elizabeth I's reign the machinery was slower than the traditional hammered process and milled production soon stopped. During the civil war many varieties of emergency money and siege pieces were struck there are far too many to list here.



Charles I shilling of group A with the second bust with double arched crown, plain square shield on the rev. Group A coins date from 1625-6. Shillings of group B have the same bust as above (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Shillings of group C have the third bust with a garnished oval shield with C R above. Group C shillings date from 1630-32 (Image from PAS: IOW-EDDD02)



Charles I shilling of group D the crown in group D is double arched. The shield on the rev of group D shillings is oval and garnished. Some types have C R at the side of the shield. Group D coins date from 1632-38 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Charles I shilling of group E, the crown is single arched, this bust is also known as the Aberystwyth type. One variety has a double arched crown. The shield on group E shillings is square and un-garnished. Date of group E coins is 1636-43 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)



Charles I shilling of group F, widespread double arched crown. Shield on rev is square, the cross ends are larger on group F shillings compare to group E ones group F coins date from 1639-46 (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK) and group G coins were produced under parliament in the name of the king and are primarily identifiable from the heavy moustache on the kings bust.



Briot's milled shilling of Charles I second issue (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

Type A of the halfgroat and pence don't have a bust and instead have crowned roses (halfgroat) and uncrowned roses (penny) on both obverse and reverse.

There are three main types of copper farthings these are called Richmond type, Maltravers rounds and the rose type. The main difference between the rose type and the first two types is that instead of a crowned harp on the rev it is a crowned rose. The difference between the Richmond and the Maltravers

types is the crown, both have a crowned harp on the reverse but the Richmond crown is single arched whereas the Maltravers crown is double arched



Charles I rose farthing type 2, single crowned rose on the rev (Image from PAS: LON-EEE4A5)

### **The Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell 1649-60**

After Charles I's execution parliament began to issue coins in the name of the republic and later in 1657 and 1658 the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell issued coins with his bust and titles. There is not a great variety of types and the same design of Commonwealth and Cromwell coins continued throughout the period and are shown in the diagrams below



Commonwealth shilling (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)





Oliver Cromwell halfcrown (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

### **Charles II 1660-85**

Charles was restored to the throne in 1660 and for the first two years of his reign coins were produced using the hammered process, however in late 1662 the hammered process finally came to an end and coins were produced by machine from early 1663 to the present day. The milled issued will be covered in part three of these introductory guides. There are three main issues for Charles II's hammered series. The first issue has no mark of value or inner circles, the second issue has a mark of value but no inner circles and the third issue has a mark of value and inner circles.



Charles II hammered halfcrown of the second issue (Image courtesy of Spink and coins of the UK)

## **Further reading**

T. Everson 'The Galata guide to the farthing tokens of James I and Charles I'

F.R Cooper 1970 'The English silver crowns of James I' British Numismatic Journal volume 39

F.R Cooper 1968 'Silver crowns of the tower mint of Charles I' British Numismatic Journal volume 37

M. Lessen 1966 'A summary of the coinage of Cromwell coinage' British Numismatic Journal volume 35

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